One sentence summary:

In James Charlton’s chapter “The Dimensions of Disability Oppression”, he declares an analysis of levels in society and how they come to be in order to truly understand disability.

Quotes and Paraphrases:

“To understand the consequences and implications for people with disabilities an analysis is called for which considers how the overarching structures of society influence this trend” (147).

To truly understand people with disabilities, the history of society must be understood.

“Today, class not only structures the political and economic relationships between the worker, peasant, farmer, intellectual, small-scale entrepreneur, government bureaucrat, army general, banker, and industrialist, it mediates family and community life insofar as relationships exist in these which affect people’s economic viability. In political-economic terms, everyday life is informed by where and how individuals, families, and communities are incorporated into world system dominated by the few who control the means of production and force” (148).

Presently, class more than gives a basis society but it also determines relationships that exist economically. Basically, political standing are determined by how a person lives by the people with power.

“For the first, probably in the mid-1700s in parts of Europe, people living outside the spheres of production and exchange, the “surplus people,” could rely on others to survive. Family members and friends who could accumulate more than the barest minimum necessary for survival had the “luxury” of being able to care for others” (149).

Starting from the mid-1700s to present, people with disabilities (surplus population) had the privilege of being able to “survive” off of their family members, since those family members are now able to have excess income.

“…cultures are not independent or static formations. They interface and interact in the everyday world with history, politics and power, economic conditions and institutions, and nature” (150).

Cultures are constantly changing, and dependent on more than one factor including history, politics and power, economic conditions and institutions, and nature.

“The point is not that one culture makes people do or think this and another that but that ideas and beliefs are informed by and in cultures and that cultures are partial expressions of a world in which the dualities of domination/subordination, superiority/inferiority, normality/abnormality are relentlessly reinforced and legitimized” (151).

Cultures are not exclusive of one another, but they depend on binaries that exist in the world.

“Consciousness, however, is not a linear progression. At points this quantitative buildup congeals into a “rupture,” or a qualitative or transformational leap to another stage of consciousness where another spiral-like phenomenon begins. Consciousness can leap from being-in-itself (existence as is) to being-for-itself (consciously desiring change)” (152).

Consciousness does not grow continuously, but rather, exponentially. Consciousness is interconnected that can either stand alone or be a part of a never ending chain.

“…we must examine the diffuse circuitry of power and ideology. This exercise is particularly difficult because power and ideology not only organize the way in which individuals experience politics, economics, and culture, they contradictorily obscure or illuminate why and how the dimensions of (disability) oppression are reproduced” (153).

Power and ideology not only organize politics, economics, and culture but they also determine disability oppression.

“The meaning and definition of the labels [referring to student with disabilities] differ, but they all signify inferiority on their face. Furthermore, these students are constantly told what they can (potentially/expect to) do and what they cannot do from their date of labeling. This happens as a natural matter of course in the classroom” (154).

From the moment a student is labeled as disabled, they are told what is expected of them and what their limit is.

“Special Education, like so many other reforms won by the popular struggle, has been transformed from a way to increase the probability that students with disabilities will get some kind of an education into a badge of inferiority and a rule-bound, bureaucratic process of separating and then warehousing millions of young people that the dominant culture has no need for” (155).

Special Education has transformed from the original idea of supplying education to the disabled to a schooling that groups the inferior together.

“In the United States surveys have shown that more people form attitudes about disabilities from telethons than any other source” (156).

Most people in the U.S. have gotten their views of disabilities from telethons.

“The dehumanization of people with disabilities through language (as just one obvious example) has a profound influence on consciousness. They, like other oppressed peoples, are constantly told by the dominant culture what they cannot do and what their place is in society” (157).

The dehumanization of people with disabilities affects consciousness hugely. Dominant culture is continuously telling the oppressed people alike what they are able to do.

Citation: Charlton, James. “The Dimensions of Disability Oppression”. *The Disabilities Studies*. Ed. Lennard J. Davis. Third ed. New York, NY: Routledge, 1997. 223-236. Print.